

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2546

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CI

SUBJECT: CHILEAN GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER ATTACKS AMBASSADOR POPPER

1. SUMMARY: U.S. WIRE SERVICES MAY BE REPORTING HEAD-LINED ATTACK ON AMBASSADOR POPPER IN GOC-OWNED NEWS ORGAN ALLEGING THAT HE IS "SOVIET AGENT". STORY APPARENTLY ORIGINATES FROM NOVEMBER 19 ISSUE OF "THE HERALD OF FREEDOM" JOHN BIRCHITE PUBLICATION. FOREIGN MINISTER HAS TELEPHONED AMBASSADOR TO COMMKNICATE PRESIDENT PINOCHET'S DISPLEASURE OVER STORY AND TO STATE THAT RESPONSIBLE PERSON IS BEING DISCHARGED TODAY. GOC HAS ISSUED OFFICIAL STATEMENT DEPLORING STORY, REPUDIATING ITS VALIDITY, AND STATING IT DOES NOT REFLECT GOC VIEWPOINT. END SUMMARY.

2. BANNER FRONT-PAGE HEADLINE OF GOC-OWNED DAILY AND MOUTHPIECE "EL CRONISTA" DECEMBER 10 READS "AMBASSADOR POPPER ACCUSED OF BEING SOVIET AGENT: NORTH AMERICAN PERIODICAL FORMULATES SERIOUS CHARGES AGAINST U.S. DIPLOMATIC CHIEF IN CHILE." BRIEF PARA THEN QUOTES JOHN BIRCHITE "HERALD OF FREEDOM" AS STATING INTER ALIA THAT AMBASSADOR HAS MAINTAINED CONNECTIONS WITH SOVIET INTELLIGENCE SERVICES.

3. FULL PAGE INSIDE STORY CITES NOVEMBER 19 ISSUE OF "HERALD OF FREEDOM" AS SOURCE OF ACCUSATION THAT AMBASSADOR IS AMONG THOSE PARTICIPATING N THE "CONSPIRACY AGAINST CHILE". ARTICLE REPEATS HOARY RIGHT-WING CHARGES THAT AMBASSADOR ENTERED STATE DEPARTMENT "ON RECOMMENDATION OF COMMUNIST SPY ALGER

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HISS" AND RAKES UP MATERIAL REPEATEDLY CONSIDERED -- AND

REJECTED -- DURING MCCARTHY PERIOD BY U.S. SECURITY AGENCIES, LEADING TO CONCLUSION THAT AMBASSADOR HAS A CONTINUING CONNECTION WITH SOVIET INTELLIGENCE. STATEMENT IS MADE THAT POPPER, PERSONALLY SELECTED AS AMBASSADOR BY SECRETARY KISSINGER, "SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE LAST MAN TO BE AMBASSADOR IN A COUNTRY WHERE PATRIOTS HAD BEEN WOUNDED AND KILLED TO OVERTHROW A COMMUNIST DICTATOR. WITH THE CHILEAN COMMUNIST LEADERS HEMMED IN OR IN PRISON OR EXILE, IN A GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS NO DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH CUBA OR THE U.S.S.R., COMMUNISTS WORK SECRETLY IN CHILE AND MAY WELL THINK THAT THEY CAN LOOK TO A LEADER IN THE U.S. EMBASSY THERE."

4. BALANCE OF ARTICLE SUMMARIZES EARLIER, UNOFFICIAL ATTACKS ON AMBASSADOR, AND UNDER SIDE-BY-SIDE PHOTOGRAPHS OF AMBASSADOR AND THE LATE ORLANDO LETELIER CONTESTS AT LENGTH ALLEGATIONS THAT GOC MIGHT HAVE BEEN BEHIND LETELIER'S ASSASSINATION.

5. USING A TRUSTED MILITARY CHANNEL, AMBASSADOR DEMANDED IMMEDIATE EXPLANATION FROM GOC AND INDICATION THAT GOVERNMENT HAD NOT BEEN CONNECTED WITH PUBLICATION OF ARTICLE. REPRESENTATIONS WERE ALSO MADE AT FOREIGN OFFICE AND WITH OFFICIAL GOC PRESS SPOKESMAN.

6. AT NOON. FOREIGN MINISTER CARVAJAL TELEPHONED AMBASSADOR. SAID PRESIDENT PINOCHET HAD JUST INFORMED HIM (CARVAJAL) OF HIS GREAT DISPLEASURE OVER ARTICLE; THAT HE HAD READ IT WITH REGRET; AND THAT HE HAD ORDERED THAT RESPONSIBLE JOURNALIST AT "EL CRONISTA" SHOULD BE DISCHARGED TODAY.

7. AMBASSADOR SAID SUCH CHARGES HAD REPEATEDLY BEEN MADE AGAINST HIM BY EXTREME RIGHT-WING FRINT IN U.S. AND WERE BASELESS. HE APPRECIATED CONFIRMATION THAT GOC OFFICIALS HAD NOT BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR ARTICLE AND WERE DISPLEASED WITH IT. IF THIS WERE CLEARLY SEEN BY ALL TO BE THE CASE, AMBASSADOR WOULD CONSIDER INCIDENT CLOSED AND WOULD MAINTAIN UNCHANGED HIS OFFICIAL AND PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT LEADERS.

8. EMBASSY IS RECEIVING NUMBER OF PRESS INQUIRIES, AND WIRE SERVICES MAY REPORT TO U.S. ACCORDINGLY, U.S. SPOKESMAN IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OFFERING FOLLOWING WHEN QUERIED: QUOTE: THE ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING AMBASSADOR POPPER, CONTAINED IN THE HEADLINES AND TEXT, AND LIFTED FROM AN OBSCURE AND EXTREMIST PUBLICATION WITH A MICROSCOPIC CIRCULATION, ARE FALSE AND SCURRILOUS. UNQUOTE.

9. IN AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT, GOC HAS NOW EXPRESSED REGRET AND HAS REPUDIATED CHARGES. (DEPTEL.)

10. FROM OUR DISCUSSIONS AT DIEGO PORTALES BUILDING,
GOVERNMENT HEADQUARTERS, AND FOREIGN OFFICE, WE ARE CONVINCED
THAT, STUPID AS IT MAY SEEM, STORY WAS WORK OF "EL CRONISTA"
EDITORIAL STAFF WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF HIGHER AUTHORITIES.
WE SPECULATE THAT ASSISTANT EDITOR SAVERIO SPROVERA, TODAY
RETURNING FROM THE U.S., MAY HAVE BEEN THE SOURCE.
POPPER

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